

D.C. Aug 30/86

Funding failed to tear apart Renfrew County

A year ago, parents and students across Renfrew County predicted full funding of Catholic schools would tear apart communities from Barry's Bay to Arnprior.

One public school trustee, Stewart Mark, went so far as to compare full financing to a "gang rape" of the public school system.

Education Minister Sean Conway, who represents the riding of Renfrew North, was shaken and stunned by the remark.

Twelve months later, Mark and other members of the county's public school community admit they may have over-reacted.

"But I think the bill (on Catholic funding) has changed drastically," he says.

"Single-school communities are going to be protected and they weren't in the original draft. The concept of enforced splitting of society, that's been totally dropped."

Single-school communities have

not been ripped apart. Schools have not been split in two and the Catholic board's extension has drained fewer than 100 students from the county's public system.

The Catholic board has added grades to its two high schools, one in Renfrew and the other in Pembroke. Its once ambitious plans to share schools in communities where there's only one high school will likely never reach fruition, says Joey Trimm, chairman of the county's Catholic school board.

"There's really been no change," says Barbara Hinsperger, chairman of the public board committee studying the impact of full funding.

"People are pleased."

Hinsperger and Mark are pleased that the bill has been changed to give all students access to Catholic schools and that there's no enforced religion.

"I also thing the issue of discriminatory hiring has been ad-

ressed," Mark says.

"What we've ended up with is another public system where the tone is set up by the Catholic community... I'm a lot happier with how it turned out. Most people are."

Last year, Hinsperger described the mood in communities throughout the county as "one of absolute unrest and fear."

Today, Trimm describes the mood as "absolutely wonderful."

He says the Catholic board's approach is "going to be slow and cautious. We're definitely not going to do anything that's going to take away from the existing school system."

The county extends about 200 kilometres from Arnprior to beyond Deux Rivières along the Ottawa River and about 120 kilometres north to south from Pembroke to the border of Hastings County.

"On the whole, things have been very, very quiet," says Hinsper-

ger, who is the board's former chairman.

Trimm says he no longer hears from ratepayers on the issue and, unlike last year, there's little on the matter in the local media.

"Things seem to have settled down."

As for Conway, he says he's not surprised at how things turned out in his riding.

"These are my friends and my neighbors and they've always shown themselves to be sensible people with good judgment. They've worked effectively to meet the requirements of this policy as they have done in so many other cases," he said.

"I was quite confident the people of my county would work it out in the best interests of the students. I said repeatedly last summer that I was going to listen to what people said. I was not just going to listen, I was going to act on any constructive criticism."

New Opeongo vice-principal *Sept. 11/86*

Garth Gilligan likes school, area

After years of being an educator in an urban area, returning to a rural setting agrees quite nicely with Opeongo High School's new vice-principal Garth Gilligan.

"I think Opeongo is a gorgeous school in a superb setting," said Mr. Gilligan who, along with principal Wilmer Matthews, comprise the new top administrative team at the school.

The fact that Mr. Gilligan enjoys the surroundings at Kelly's Corners shouldn't come as too much of a surprise when one considers that he is a native of Mattawa and is familiar with the Valley.

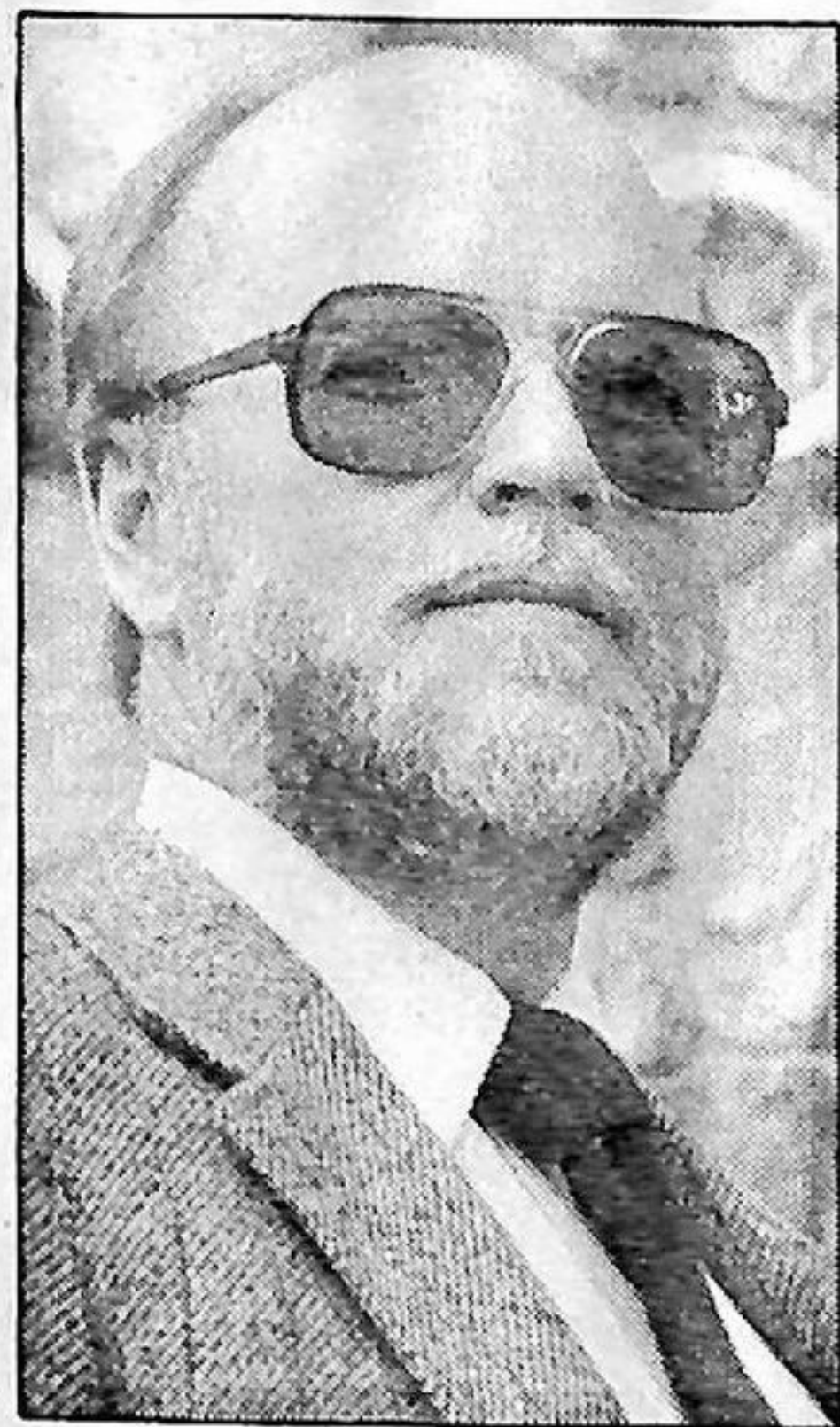
For the past two decades though, he has worked in the Nation's Capital teaching at Hillcrest, Champlain and Nepean High Schools, spending eight years with the Ottawa Board of Education's Program Department and the last two as co-ordinator of the General Studies Pilot Project for the OBE out of Rideau High School.

Mr. Gilligan explains what his job for the past couple of years entailed. "We tried and did develop a program in communication skills for general students at the grade nine and 10 level," he said. The program was formulated so it could be adapted in other schools within the Ottawa system.

However, he felt the time was right for a change.

"I wanted to be back with students and teachers again," Mr. Gilligan said. "I feel strongly this is what

I want to be and I wanted to come back to a small community."



Garth Gilligan

He took the Renfrew County Board of Education's Leadership Program and it made a favourable impression on him, so much so that he told Director of Education Howard Hempstead and several trustees "just how impressed I was with their approach."

Communications

Mr. Gilligan takes a

"very strong personal interest" in communication skills, particularly at the general level, and hopes to bring some of his knowledge in the area to Opeongo students.

He believes both communication and thinking skills are important to enable the student to handle outside responsibilities.

"We have to be conscious of what's happening in the world," the vice-principal said, "especially the world of employment."

Opeongo students should expect to see a fair bit of their new VP as he doesn't plan to be stuck behind his desk toiling on administrative chores only.

"I'll sit in my office for only a small part of the day," said Mr. Gilligan. "More often I'll be out in the halls with teachers and the kids."

Counselling is also on his agenda, as is assisting grade nine students in

getting oriented to the high school environment.

Garth Gilligan is a busy man and so far the transition for him to a new position has been a smooth one.

"When school is starting out, it's always very hectic, but the ladies in the office tell me it's the quietest opening they've had in years. Mr. Matthews and I are quite pleased things are flowing along nicely."

Mr. Gilligan has found the students to be "friendly, open" and "extremely co-operative" and is impressed with the quality of the staff.

Opeongo's motto for the new school year is 'Opeongo Pride' and it's evident although the semester is but a week old, Mr. Gilligan, too, has acquired that sense of pride.

"I love it," he said of OHS. "It's a beautiful place."